OpenPrescribing:
Identifying the general practices prescribing “low priority” treatments

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Introduction
To accompany the release of our new tool on OpenPrescribing.net we have performed some initial analysis on the data, prior to a longer technical publication that will follow. This paper describes the level and variation of prescribing in each of the different “low priority” treatments under review by NHS England. We use data from our OpenPrescribing.net project, which imports prescribing data from the extremely large monthly raw data files published by NHS Digital which include all general practices in England. See here for more detail.

Firstly, Table 1 describes the total number of items and total cost of prescribing for all low priority treatments in the last year, and also shows how much each prescription cost on average for these treatments. Here the total cost to the NHS varies greatly, from £37m to £78k, partly due to variation in the number of prescriptions made, and partly due to differences in the cost of each treatment. Following that, there are two pages of charts for each individual treatment, to show variation across the country in prescribing volume and cost. For each treatment there is also a map to show how prescribing varies by CCG in the last month, where dark blue areas identify low prescribing areas, and dark red are high prescribing areas. For each map there is a link to the live map on OpenPrescribing.net, from which a higher resolution map can be obtained for the whole country, or any region. All data on OpenPrescribing.net updates on a monthly basis as new data becomes available. Lastly there is a histogram which shows variation among practices in volume of prescribing, allowing readers to see how much variation there is across the country; followed by two line graphs that show how the volume and cost of prescribing have changed over time, across deciles of general practices.

We will be publishing a more extensive analysis of the data in the coming months, including factors associated with high prescribing of low priority treatments. However, some key initial insights from the data include:

1. These drugs combined cost the NHS over £180m in the last year (July 2016 to June 2017).
2. Usage of all the treatments has generally been declining over the past year, except for three (fentanyl immediate release, lidocaine plasters and tadalafil once daily).
3. While volumes have fallen, costs have recently risen very dramatically for some of these treatments (coproxamol, liothyronine and trimipramine), making the cost per prescription very high.
4. Importantly, a large proportion of practices avoid many of these treatments altogether. This suggests that complete avoidance of these 19 low-priority treatments is clinically and practically feasible and achievable, in many cases.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Mean cost per item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fentanyl immediate release</td>
<td>899,461</td>
<td>£37,145,906</td>
<td>£41.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liothyronine</td>
<td>71,741</td>
<td>£29,555,306</td>
<td>£411.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trimipramine</td>
<td>59,420</td>
<td>£20,214,868</td>
<td>£340.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gluten free products</td>
<td>1,295,581</td>
<td>£18,668,896</td>
<td>£14.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lidocaine plasters</td>
<td>258,696</td>
<td>£17,970,517</td>
<td>£69.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rubefacients</td>
<td>2,022,801</td>
<td>£13,536,680</td>
<td>£6.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tadalafil once daily</td>
<td>181,085</td>
<td>£10,635,133</td>
<td>£58.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-proxamol</td>
<td>47,777</td>
<td>£7,601,035</td>
<td>£159.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doxazosin modified release</td>
<td>621,037</td>
<td>£6,599,282</td>
<td>£10.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Omega-3 fatty acid compounds</td>
<td>191,250</td>
<td>£5,412,322</td>
<td>£28.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxycodone and naloxone combination</td>
<td>68,337</td>
<td>£4,461,059</td>
<td>£65.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel vaccines</td>
<td>236,840</td>
<td>£3,613,876</td>
<td>£15.26</td>
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<td>Dosulepin</td>
<td>871,162</td>
<td>£2,222,722</td>
<td>£2.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paracetamol and tramadol combination</td>
<td>110,247</td>
<td>£1,675,191</td>
<td>£15.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lutein and antioxidants</td>
<td>157,650</td>
<td>£1,540,941</td>
<td>£9.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perindopril arginine</td>
<td>119,421</td>
<td>£1,395,133</td>
<td>£11.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glucosamine and chondroitin</td>
<td>28,237</td>
<td>£386,468</td>
<td>£13.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homeopathy</td>
<td>5,975</td>
<td>£77,921</td>
<td>£13.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,246,719</strong></td>
<td><strong>£182,713,256</strong></td>
<td><strong>£25.21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRESCRIBING OF INDIVIDUAL LOW PRIORITY TREATMENTS

Co-proxamol
Total spending over previous year £7,601,035
Total items 47,778

Interactive map here

Total items per practice - distribution across practices
**Dosulepin**

Total spending over previous year £2,222,722
Total items 871,162

*Interactive map here*
Items per 1000 patients - practice deciles

Cost per 1000 patients - practice deciles
Doxazosin modified release
Total spending over previous year £6,599,282
Total items 621,037

Interactive map here
Fentanyl immediate release

Total spending over previous year £37,145,906

Total items 899,461

Interactive map here
Glucosamine and chondroitin
Total spending over previous year £386,468
Total items 28,237

Interactive map here — this map does not include all relevant products due to web site limitations (though the below charts do)
Gluten free products
Total spending over previous year £18,668,896
Total items 1,295,581

Interactive map here
Homeopathy
Total spending over previous year £77,921
Total items 5,975

Interactive map here
Lidocaine plasters
Total spending over previous year £17,970,517
Total items 258,696

Interactive map here

Total items per practice - distribution across practices
Liothyronine
Total spending over previous year £29,555,306
Total items 71,741

Interactive map here
Lutein and antioxidants
Total spending over previous year £1,540,941
Total items 157,650

Interactive map here
**Omega-3 fatty acid compounds**

Total spending over previous year £5,412,322

Total items 191,250

Interactive map here
Oxycodone and naloxone combination product
Total spending over previous year £4,461,059
Total items 68,337
Perindopril arginine
Total spending over previous year £1,395,133
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Interactive map here
Rubefacients
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Interactive map here

Total items per practice - distribution across practices
Travel vaccines
Total spending over previous year £3,613,876
Total items 236,840

[Interactive map here]
Trimipramine
Total spending over previous year £20,214,868
Total items 59,420

Interactive map here

Total items per practice - distribution across practices